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ABSTRACT

The fifth of six volumes in the "Elementary Principal Series," this booklet clarifies the principal's leadership role in developing an effective school discipline policy that stresses staff involvement and student self-control. As team leader, the principal works with staff to establish standards and insists that they be enforced. A principal sets the discipline tone by being highly visible. Developing an effective discipline plan requires staff and parent input and familiarity with relevant professional literature. The principal may also consider commercially available programs such as Assertive Discipline, the Hunter behavior management system, or William Glasser's 10-step process requiring students to evaluate their own behavior. Any plan must be tailored to a school's specific needs and be consistent with district policies. Tips are provided for helping teachers maintain effective discipline, working with parents on discipline problems, working with difficult children, and dealing with legal and parental considerations regarding corporal punishment. Some common-sense guidelines for schools allowing corporal punishment are also included. (18 references) (MLH)

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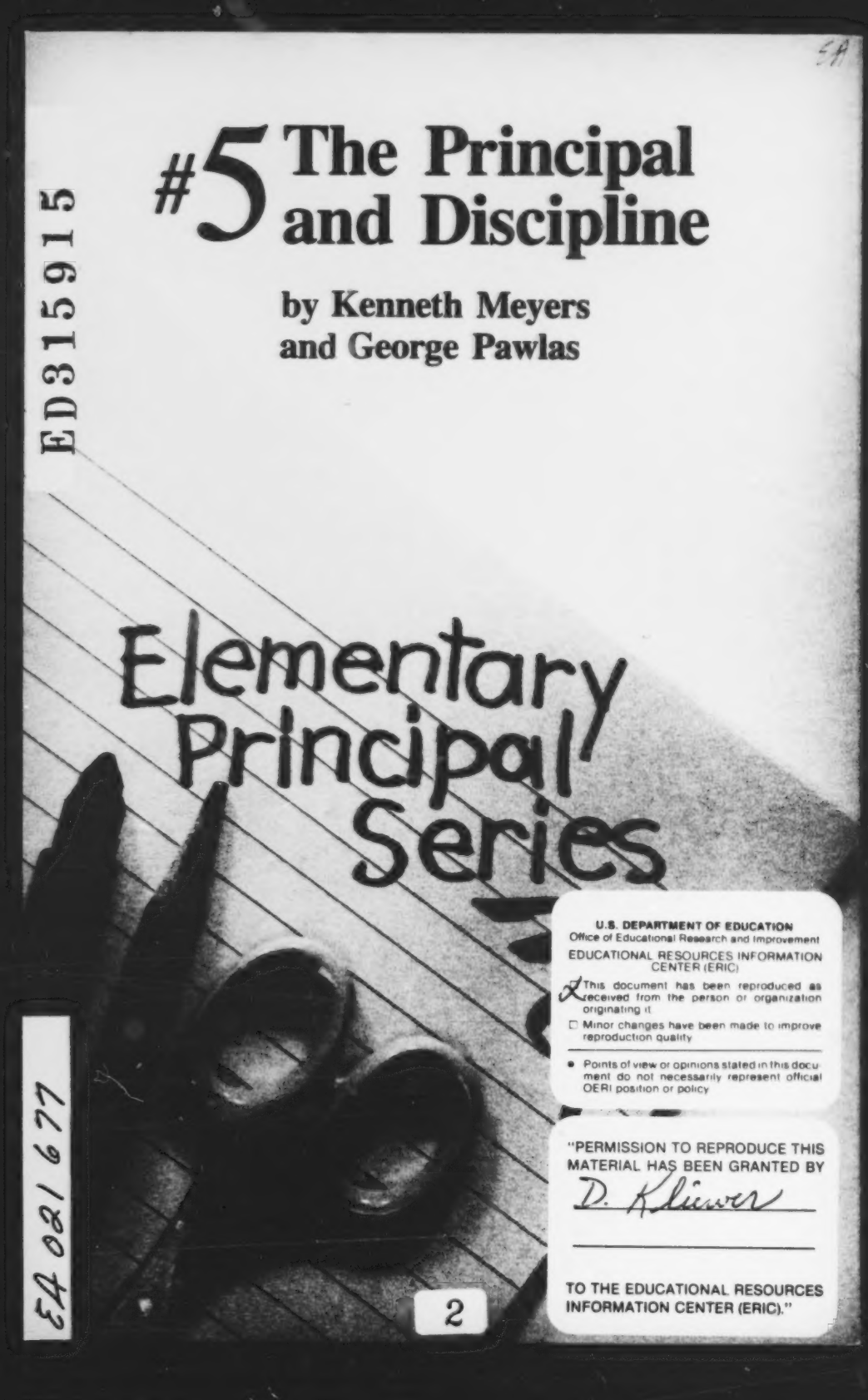
#5 The Principal and Discipline

by Kenneth Meyers
and George Pawlas

Elementary Principal Series



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Elementary Principal Series No. 5

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A Look at Discipline

Discipline regularly appears at the top of the list of school problems in the annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Polls of Attitudes Toward Education. It is a vexing problem for beginning teachers and remains a problem even for experienced teachers; it consumes an inordinate amount of a principal's time.

People have different perceptions of what the term discipline means. Four commonly held views of discipline are:

1. The degree of order maintained in the classroom. This is discipline we have.
2. The means employed to establish, maintain, or restore order in the classroom. This is discipline we use.
3. The specific means we use to punish offenders. In this sense, discipline is the punishment we inflict.
4. The means we use to develop self-discipline or self-control. This is the discipline we live.

The fourth definition will be the major thrust of this booklet. Self-discipline means having a sense of responsibility for one's own conduct. It means accepting agreed-on rules and procedures. It means having the inner strength to resist peer pressure to engage in inappropriate behavior. Self-disciplined people have a positive self-image. They feel good about themselves and have specific goals they are trying to achieve. These are the qualities we must try to develop in children if they are to be self-discipined.

There are no simple prescriptions for achieving discipline, but schools with good discipline do have some common characteristics. The Phi Delta Kappa Commission on Discipline (*Handbook for Developing Schools with Good Discipline* 1982) identified eight factors associated with schools with good discipline:

- The way people in a school work together to solve problems;
- The way authority and status are allocated and symbolized in the school;
- The degree to which students feel they belong in the school and feel that it serves them;
- The way rules are developed, communicated, and enforced;
- The ways of dealing with personal problems of students and staff;
- The way in which the physical facilities and the organizational structure of the school reinforce educational goals;
- The relationship between the school, the community, and the homes it serves;
- The quality of the curriculum and instructional practices.

A school's discipline plan requires the commitment of all adults in the school. They must share in the authority for carrying out the plan. Students, too, must have a sense of ownership of the discipline plan. When they are involved in developing the plan, there will be greater acceptance of and compliance with the plan. How the rules are conveyed to students also has a direct bearing on their acceptance. For example, role-playing to show appropriate behavior in various classroom or playground situations is an effective method to communicate expectations.

However, do not expect students, especialy at the elementary level, to learn all the rules and procedures in one day. Appropriate behavior must be taught, modeled, monitored, and then retaught. This is especially true when students have been away from school for a time – after the summer vacation or the winter holiday break. This is a time when rules and procedures need to be reviewed both in the classroom and schoolwide.

The discipline plan must be applied consistently. If some students perceive that others are receiving preferential treatment, they will be the first to let you know about the "unfair" treatment. However, being consistent does not mean that there is no place for flexibility. For instance, a student setting off a false fire alarm has committed a serious offense demanding an immediate disciplinary response. But your response would be different if the student were a first-grader than if he were a sixth-grader with a history of misbehavior. For the first-grader a stern reprimand may be all that is necessary. For the sixth-grader, such an act might be ground for suspension or at least a parent conference.

Another aspect of your school discipline plan is a survey of the physical plant to see where potential trouble spots might be. The survey should include hallways, cafeteria, auditorium, and playground, as well as classrooms. Walk through your school and around the grounds and mentally note the expectations you should establish for the total school discipline plan.

A final component of your discipline plan is disseminating it to parents and the community. Use both school publications and the local media to communicate the message that your school considers discipline important and that policies are in place to see that discipline is enforced. Keep these elements of a school discipline plan in mind as we turn now to to the principal's role in developing the plan.

The Key Role of the Principal in a School's Discipline Plan

No other person in a school has as much direct influence on the school's discipline climate as the principal. However, principals are not magicians who can reach into their bag of tricks and instantaneously change the discipline climate of a school from bad to good. To change the discipline climate of a school requires that the entire staff work together as a team. The principal, as the team leader, begins the process by working with the staff to establish standards and by insisting that those standards be met. These standards must be clearly stated and understood by all concerned. Then they must be communicated repeatedly and enforced consistently and fairly.

The principal sets the discipline tone of the school by being highly visible – by greeting the children when they arrive in the morning, by patrolling the halls periodically, and by spending some time on the playground. This visibility allows the principal to get to know students on an informal basis and conveys to them that he or she is interested in and cares about them. This visibility also allows the principal to be aware of potential trouble spots (fights, bullying, snowball throwing, etc.) requiring disciplinary action.

In developing an effective discipline plan, the principal needs input from various adult groups associated with the school. In addition to the faculty and other professional staff, such groups might include parents of students attending the school and even parents whose children previously attended the school. Their input can be valuable by providing "the way it used to be" perspective. If possible, include representatives from the community. Some schools already have advisory committees or councils comprised of community representatives. Since these groups have a vested interest in the school, their counsel can be very useful. The involvement of these key peo-

ple will help to communicate to the community that the school places great importance on an orderly climate for learning.

Your school's parent/teacher organization is an obvious group to tap in developing your discipline plan, particularly the leaders of such organizations. These persons are committed to supporting the school and have a personal interest in any discipline policy that affects their own children. They also are in a position to provide direct feedback about the impact of the discipline plan on their children. The PTA also provides a forum for disseminating your discipline philosophy and specific policies through the organization's newsletter or general meetings.

Also remember to ask the cafeteria and custodial staffs for their input about discipline. These people have many interactions with students and often can offer commonsense ideas about maintaining an orderly climate as it relates to their own jobs. By involving them you will be sending a clear message that you consider them important members of the staff and that you value their suggestions. The authors have found it is better to interview the cafeteria and custodial staff in a group setting rather than as individuals, because it lends a degree of formality to the deliberations and they can react to each other's ideas. As the school's discipline plan evolves, be sure to keep this group informed about the progress and indicate how their suggestions are being incorporated into the plan.

The faculty, of course, have the biggest stake in the school's discipline plan; and they play a key role in whether or not it will be successful. They also have strong feelings about the way children should behave in school and how they should be disciplined, but their views may vary widely on these matters. In your get-acquainted interviews with individual staff, broach the topic of discipline in general terms and seek their views on the topic. Also, be prepared to offer your own views. Do the same if you are interviewing candidates for a teaching position in your school. After you have gathered individual responses, you will have a good reading of your staff's views on discipline.

A final suggestion for developing your school's discipline plan is to become familiar with some of the professional literature on the topic. And remember to share it with your staff. You can make a good start with the references listed at the end of this booklet.

Developing a Schoolwide Discipline Plan

When a new principal takes the reins of a school, he or she should have in mind some specific goals regarding schoolwide discipline and some methods for achieving those goals. This is especially important if the new principal has been brought in to "straighten up" an undisciplined school. For example, a specific goal might be reducing the number of discipline referrals to the office. The method to achieve this goal might be increased classroom observations and a building inservice program dealing with effective classroom management techniques.

Remember, however, that you cannot develop a schoolwide discipline plan by administrative edict. It will require the collaboration of teachers, students, and parents. One of your leadership challenges will be to convince the "old guard" that you are not trying to usurp their authority to discipline as they see fit. Your strongest argument for a schoolwide discipline plan is that it will provide consistency across grade levels and among individual classrooms. It will communicate to students and parents that an orderly learning environment is a high priority in your school.

In developing a schoolwide discipline plan, you may want to consider some of the commercially available programs. A popular one that has received national attention is Assertive Discipline, developed by Lee Canter. It is based on the premise that no student has the right to disrupt learning. It calls for clearly stated rules and consequences, which are to be enforced consistently. Students are disciplined in graduated steps depending on the severity of the infraction, with the final consequence being removal of the student from the classroom or the school. The program is flexible, allowing a school staff to devise consequences they feel are appropriate for the culture

of a particular school. Also, teachers can use elements of the program in their classroom and thus complement the schoolwide program.

Another essential element of the Assertive Discipline program is its requirement of parental contact, both at the early stages through notes and phone calls and at the later stages through face-to-face contact if student suspension is under consideration. The requirement of parental contact becomes important when in-school disciplinary efforts show no results. Forcing parents to respond to the problem may lead to confrontation, but it makes them realize that their child's problem demands their cooperation with the school.

Another program worth investigating is the behavior management system developed by Madeline Hunter and associates. This system uses a behavior substitution and reinforcement approach. Identified misbehaviors are replaced with acceptable behaviors using a schedule of reinforcements provided by the teacher, principal, or other staff member. For example, you notice a student throwing paper on the ground. You stop the student, correct the behavior, and ask that the student help you pick up the papers in the vicinity. You then follow up by thanking the student for his help, thus reinforcing the desired behavior. This behavior substitution and reinforcement approach has great merit.

William Glasser, author of *Schools Without Failure*, offers a 10-step process for working with students who misbehave. Rather than using isolation as punishment, it calls for students to evaluate their own misbehavior and to resolve it. It requires that the teacher or principal take time to help students talk through the situation, how they reacted to it, and how they will act the next time the same circumstances occur. Glasser's approach has been successfully implemented in schools throughout the country and is well worth considering.

Implementing any of the three programs briefly described above usually requires inservice training, sometimes using outside consultants. However, many schools have developed successful discipline plans of their own design. The advantage of a locally developed plan is that those who developed it have a sense of ownership and are committed to seeing that it is successful.

In developing a schoolwide discipline plan, the following questions should be addressed:

1. Are the goals for the plan and expectations for student behavior published and disseminated so that all students, parents, and staff are aware of them?

2. Is the plan balanced in terms of the number of rules imposed? Too many rules can lead to an oppressive environment. Too few rules may indicate a lack of direction and control.
3. Does the plan focus on developing a climate of self-discipline?
4. Does the plan focus too heavily on punishment for negative behavior?
5. Does the plan include a component for orienting students to the expectations for behavior by means of a student handbook, posters, assembly programs, or classroom discussions?
6. Does the plan make clear how the responsibility for implementing the plan is to be shared among teachers, parents, students, and the principal? This is an important issue to resolve, because the principal cannot and should not be expected to carry the full responsibility for implementing the plan.
7. Does the plan include a component for recognizing students who consistently display positive behavior?
8. Will parents be recruited to assist in the development of the plan?
9. Is there a provision for evaluating the plan after it has been implemented?

As you can see, there are a number of areas to consider when developing a plan tailored to the specific needs of your school. As with any new program, it will no doubt need some modifying in the beginning and further fine tuning after evaluating it over a year or so. The payoff will be a workable plan that has the support of teachers, parents, and students.

A final consideration is making sure the superintendent and board of education are informed about your schoolwide discipline plan. This should start with notifying them that you want to institute a plan, how you intend to do it, who will be involved, and what your expected outcomes will be. Submit regular progress reports and a final copy of the plan. In some districts the plan will need to be officially approved by the superintendent and the board.

In the beginning stages of developing your schoolwide discipline plan, be sure to consult the superintendent about district policies relating to discipline. Your plan should be consistent with district policies. For example, if the district has specific policies about corporal punishment and procedures for suspension, your schoolwide plan must conform to these policies. Also, conforming with district policies

provides a solid defense in case a parent should initiate legal action over a disciplinary decision.

Developing a schoolwide discipline plan will require much time and administrative skill. But once in place it will serve as a guide for you and your staff for years to come.

Helping Teachers Maintain Effective Discipline

Effective teaching and effective discipline go hand in hand. When teachers plan their lessons carefully, involve students actively in learning, and use effective classroom management techniques, the incidence of discipline problems diminishes. A quality learning environment keeps discipline problems from developing.

Successful teachers relate their classroom rules to their instructional goals and communicate both to their students often. Although classroom rules may vary among teachers, it is important that each teacher apply his or her rules consistently and fairly. For example, one set of rules might deal with movement in the classroom (going to the pencil sharpener, getting supplies, going to the restroom, etc.). It is also important that students understand reasons for rules. Effective teachers explain and model what they want children to do.

One teacher we know restricts her rules to five simple questions, which cover almost all aspects of student conduct:

1. Are you respecting others' rights to learn?
2. Are you respecting others' rights not be be hurt physically or by put-downs?
3. Are you respecting others' rights to their personal property?
4. Are you helping others?
5. Are you making others feel good by giving compliments or by inviting them to join you in some activity?

Some teachers find it helpful to write out the rules and the consequences for breaking them and post them in the classroom. Then, during the initial weeks of school, they refer regularly to the rules and the reasons for them to reinforce them in the minds of the students. When a new student transfers to the classroom, a student can

be assigned to explain the rules. When students are given reponsibility for explaining classroom rules, new students are likely to take them more seriously. In schools with a highly mobile student body, the principal may want to meet with new students to review and explain school discipline expectations. New students need to know the school's general ground rules as well as specific classroom rules.

In addition to setting expectations for behavior, effective classroom managers set expectations for instructional activities. They tell students when assignments are due and post deadlines on the chalk board or classroom calendar. They indicate the format standards for submitting assignments and do not accept student work that does not meet the standards. They monitor student progress and promptly provide appropriate feedback. If necessary, they adjust their instruction and review or reteach until students master the concepts.

If a teacher regularly refers discipline problems to the principal, then it is likely that the teacher has classroom management problems and needs guidance in that area. Effective classroom managers handle most behavior problems themselves. They know what can be ignored and what needs immediate action. When punishment is necessary, they focus on the act and not the student. They avoid sarcasm and other forms of put-down. They exert control by such simple techniques as moving toward the offending student or pausing and staring at the student.

Effective classroom managers use praise judiciously. They do not praise unless it is deserved. They give more individual praise than whole group praise. They make praise specific and informative rather than general. A steady stream of "very good" or "well done" soon loses its impact.

The discipline climate of the school emanates from individual classrooms. The principal's role is to assist all teachers, but especially beginning teachers, in developing classroom management strategies that provide an orderly learning environment.

Working with Parents on Discipline Problems

Many discipline problems will require parental involvement. Parents can exert leverage in changing a student's negative behavior. Involving parents makes them own the problem and share in its solution; and it establishes another channel of communication between the school and the home.

As principals, the authors have had both positive and negative experiences when we have asked parents to become involved in the solution to their child's behavior problem. For example, a teacher observed a student kicking the main valve supplying water to eight portable classrooms until it broke. The principal confronted the student and called his father to report the incident. The father's immediate response was that his child couldn't have done it and that the teacher must be lying. Because of his father's defensive reaction, this child will never understand the seriousness of his act.

Compare the reaction of the parent above to that of the parent in the following incident. A father was notified by letter about his son's disruptive behavior in a kindergarten classroom. The father was in the principal's office the next morning. He assured the principal that the problem had been discussed at home and appropriate disciplinary action was being taken. He also stated that he wanted to be notified immediately if the problem persisted. The contrast between these two parents' attitudes illustrates the challenge facing principals who attempt to work with parents on both immediate and long-term solutions to their children's discipline problems.

The first step in working with parents on discipline might be a general communication outlining the school's expectations regarding student behavior. This could be done through your school newsletter, at a PTA meeting, or in a handout sent home with the request

that the parents sign and return it, indicating that they have read it. The communication should spell out in detail the school's code of conduct, the discipline measures used for violations of the code, and perhaps something about the school's philosophy on discipline.

Communication with individual parents about discipline problems might be through a phone call, a conference, or a note from the teacher. Emphasize to your faculty that it is important to notify parents at the onset of a behavior problem and to keep a copy of written communications and a log of oral communications, including phone calls, for future reference. There are few things as frustrating as having to answer to parents who were not notified early of their child's misbehavior, which has now reached a crisis stage calling for the principal's intervention. You may want to incorporate into your discipline plan a policy that forbids severe disciplinary measures unless the teacher validates that one or more parent contacts were made.

Parent notification about discipline problems should include these components: the offense, the frequency, attempts made to correct the behavior to date, expectations for student behavior, consequences if the behavior persists, and what is expected of the parent. Below is a sample letter illustrating these components.

Dear Mr. Smith:

Today I corrected Johnny four times for talking out without raising his hand. This may seem to be a minor matter, but it is a violation of an important rule in our classroom. Johnny was warned the first three times and he was put in a corner for 15 minutes the last time. The next time it happens he will be sent to the principal, who will request a conference with you the next day. Please talk with Johnny about the importance of raising his hand. Thank you for your help with this matter. If you have any questions, please call.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Hollins

Please sign and return tomorrow with Johnny.
Signature _____

Once parents have been notified of the problem, many will ask that they be updated weekly – even daily – on their child's progress in correcting the problem. There are several ways of providing this information. Some of the easiest are checklists, letters written by the child, standard deficiency reports authorized by the district, or simply a phone call. A weekly folder report is another easy method for notifying parents of their child's progress. This is a manila fold-

er sent home weekly with the student's graded papers for the week. It usually contains evaluations of skills mastery, whether tests or daily work, that is also recorded for report card grades. On the outside of the folder is attached a sheet of paper sectioned into boxes, each with space to record the date, number of student pages enclosed, a teacher comment, the parent's signature, and comments from the parent. It is given to the student on Friday afternoon and should be returned with a parent's signature on Monday morning.

What is important here is that the parent, child, teacher, and you agree on the schedule for sending reports home. When parents know a report is coming, it is less likely to get "lost" in transit if the student carries it home. If there is any doubt that the report will reach home, mail it.

Also important is a line on the report for the parents to initial indicating that they have seen the report. If you send a weekly report folder home, then a summary of the contents should be written on a form, attached to the outside of the folder, for the parent to initial. If you wish to provide the parent with a copy and have one returned for your records, purchase blank, 3-page, self-carbon sheets. When the letter is typed, remove the top copy. Ask the parents to initial the next two and return one copy to you. Attach the returned copy to the original as evidence of successful communication with the parent. This may be very important for reference at a conference if the parents forget the nature of the problems the child has had throughout the year.

More difficult are the parents who refuse to acknowledge that a problem exists or who fail to respond to your request for cooperation in dealing with the problem. In these cases, you will have to use your most persuasive powers to convince parents that their child's success in school hinges on their help and support. This calls for diplomacy, but sometimes you have to force the issue and be firm about what you expect from these unresponsive parents. How do you deal with this type of parent?

Your first impulse may be to want to take a legalistic approach and confront parents with district and school policies on discipline and insist that they comply with them. But before acting on such an impulse, consider what circumstances might be contributing to the parents' reluctance or refusal to cooperate.

Many households today are headed by a single parent. These parents are struggling to make ends meet and deal with a series of prob-

lems and worries on a daily basis. A problem child is just one more burden and may not be a high priority with them. Or perhaps the child is under dual custody, with neither parent willing to take responsibility for the child's behavior in school. Or sometimes the student is an only child with over-indulging parents, who are blind to their child's behavior problems.

Still another circumstance that may account for parents being unresponsive is that the parents themselves have had negative experiences when they were in school. Because of these early negative experiences, hostility lingers and tends to surface when the school seeks their cooperation in dealing with their children's problems. Their reaction may be to lash out at the school; or more often, they simply refuse to respond. This is a deep-seated problem and difficult to resolve, but being aware of it is a first step in working with these parents.

Although you must be sensitive to various family circumstances, you must make clear to parents, regardless of the home situation, that they have a responsibility for their children's behavior in school and that the school stands ready to help them.

There are various approaches to use with the difficult or unresponsive parent. One requiring only minimal parent involvement is sending home regular reports informing them of their child's behavior and academic progress and asking them to sign the report and return it. The checklist or weekly folder reports mentioned earlier are appropriate ways of establishing an initial communication link with these parents.

Another approach is a behavior contract signed by you, the teacher, the parent, and the student. The contract should spell out the behavior expected of the student, the consequences for noncompliance, and the reponsibilities of the parents and school in helping the student to meet the behavior expectations. Examples of parent responsibilities might be monitoring study hours, seeing that homework is completed, and calling the school at a designated time for a behavior report. These responsibilities are not threatening to parents, and they serve as one way of gaining their cooperation.

After-school detention is a disciplinary approach that gets the attention of unresponsive parents. Because it disrupts the home schedule and infringes on parents' time, after-school detention sends parents a clear signal that their child is causing problems. It has been our experience that unresponsive parents will accept this form of disciplinary action even if they will not agree to other kinds of involvement for dealing with their child's problems.

The ultimate action to force parents to cooperate is the threat of suspension of their child from school. Suspension is an extreme recourse and should be used for only the most serious problems. But when all else fails, it may become necessary to initiate suspension procedures in order to force parents to deal with their child's problems.

Conferencing with Parents

When dealing with parents on discipline matters, the initial conference may be a tug-of-war, with each side pulling for its solutions to the problem. Your analysis of the problem and suggested solution may be countered by the parent blaming others for the problem and wanting a different solution. When dealing with this type of confrontation, one approach is to meet the parent half way and accept the parent's solution for correcting the problem. For example, the parent might say that Johnny acts that way because he sits next to Susie who constantly teases him. Your response might be, "Okay, I'll ask Mrs. Brown to move Johnny to the other side of the room." Then follow up with, "Now are you aware of any other reasons why Johnny might be behaving like he is?"

By first offering a reasonable solution, you have disarmed the parent's defensiveness. Then by following up with the question about other reasons for Johnny's behavior, you give the parent an opportunity to talk freely in a more relaxed atmosphere. By listening carefully and asking a few probing questions, you may learn a lot more about Johnny that is germane to his problem. If Johnny's misbehavior persists after his seat has been moved, you can then approach the parent with your own solution. Because you have moved Johnny's seat and have been a sensitive listener, the negative parent is likely to become a positive supporter.

Cultivating parent support in discipline matters requires patience and time. With some parents it will take many conferences before you can gain their support. By listening to them, by being sensitive to their needs and concerns, by assuring them that your goal is not punishment but the welfare of their child, most parents will come to accept the need for discipline. There will be a few you will never reach, but do not give up on their children. The school may be the only stability these children have.

Working with the Difficult Child

In most schools, there will be a handful of students who are clearly unmanageable. They do not respond to normal disciplinary measures a teacher would use. Trying to control them monopolizes the teacher's time, and the whole class suffers as a result. Some teachers, in total frustration, will appear at your office, child in hand, and say, in effect, "I can't cope. He's your problem now." In such situations, teachers clearly have the right to expect your support and sometimes direct intervention.

From the authors' experiences as principals, we would like to state categorically that there is no *one* way for dealing with the highly disruptive child. And we would warn you to be skeptical of "experts" who claim they have *the* answer for working with this kind of student. It is our contention that even limited success with the highly disruptive child will require a variety of approaches. And we will go further and state that there will be some children who will challenge every method of behavior management at your disposal and defy you to try more. Nevertheless, there is much you can do.

One of your first options is to tap the resources of your school district. If it has a special education program for emotionally disturbed children, it is possible that a highly disruptive child may qualify for placement in a special class. You will need to be familiar with your district and state regulations regarding placement in these programs. You also might want to enlist the district's special education staff to assist in the identification of students for placement in a special class by having them observe the problem child in the regular classroom. However, avoid crying "Wolf" too often. In most cases, you and your teachers will have to deal with the problem yourselves.

The district's special education staff usually can suggest a variety of behavior management techniques for the teacher to try in the regular

classroom. Even better would be for you and the child's teacher to spend a day observing in a classroom for the emotionally disturbed to see firsthand how a specialist deals with this type of child. When arranging the visit, try to schedule time to discuss with the special teacher your diagnosis of the problems of the particular child you want to help.

When deciding on a behavior management approach, give some thought first to broad long-range goals, then to a specific objective, the management techniques to achieve the specific objective, and finally how progress will be measured. Examples of long-range goals might be relating better to others, showing respect for authority, or developing self-esteem and self-discipline. A specific objective might be reducing the number of temper tantrums, verbal outbursts, throwing objects at others, or self-injury.

Generally, it is better to concentrate on only one negative behavior at a time. A teacher who is totally frustrated with the overall behavior of a disruptive child will want all the problems remedied immediately and may have difficulty isolating a single behavior trait to correct. Here is where you can help by observing the child in the classroom and then conferencing with the teacher about a specific behavior on which to concentrate. Your encouragement and direction will give that teacher some immediate emotional support that is sorely needed.

Some teachers seem to have a natural talent for working with difficult children. Others cannot, no matter how much support you give them. One of your first decisions will be whether to work with the difficult child's current teacher or to transfer the child to a teacher with a good track record in helping this kind of child. A decision to transfer may require negotiating some concessions with the difficult child's teacher, such as taking a larger class load or giving up some time of a teacher's aide. In the authors' experiences, most will walk out of a negotiating conference feeling that they got the better deal. But do not take advantage of the receiving teacher by making repeated requests throughout the year to take on another difficult student. This teacher needs and deserves a break and can perhaps be compensated the following year by being assigned some gifted and talented children, but certainly children with more normal behavior patterns.

The behavior management plan that you and the teacher use with the difficult child should be carefully designed and strictly enforced.

Failure to enforce the plan tells the child that you and the teacher are not serious, and therefore the child will not take it seriously.

Positive reinforcements can range from sticking "smiley" faces on worksheets the child has done particularly well to taking a trip to the ice cream store with the teacher or principal after a full day of good behavior. We have seen children modify their behavior for such simple reward/recognition as eating lunch with the principal or taking the class guinea pig home for the weekend. The key is finding out what kinds of reinforcement work with the child. Sometimes the child's parents can suggest what will work best. Sometimes children themselves might suggest unreasonable rewards and will need help narrowing the possibilities. The point here is to make sure that there are some positive reinforcements in your behavior management plan. In other words, children must know that the reward is for them and is recognized as a reward by them and by others. The reward must have real power to influence their behavior.

Just as there must be positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior, there must be clearly understood consequences for inappropriate behavior. Your behavior management plan must have a balance of rewards that are worth working for and consequences or punishments that are to be avoided. Parents also must be informed of the consequences.

For some extreme behaviors, there must be automatic, non-negotiable forms of punishment. For example, a child who regularly throws a temper tantrum should know that it will result immediately in his being isolated for 15 minutes. Of course, there will be situations where the punishment is tempered because of the circumstances, but consistency in punishment should be a basic premise of your behavior management plan. Some typical punishments are isolation (in classroom or out), work details such as picking up litter on the school grounds (for some children this is a reward), and loss of such privileges as going on a field trip or participating in a class party.

Another element in your behavior management plan is setting up a schedule of time increments during which the child can demonstrate success. For example, a child who constantly shouts out in class might be monitored in 15-minute increments. If he can control his shouting for 15 minutes, he is rewarded with an M&M candy. Gradually, as the child's behavior improves, the time increments are increased before a reward is given. It is important to make rewards and punishments as immediate as possible. This creates a consistent pattern, which the child comes to recognize and accept.

The last consideration in your behavior management plan for the difficult child is determining what constitutes success. Accept the fact that progress with this kind of child comes slowly. A teacher may become so frustrated with a child's temper tantrums that she forgets he made it through the morning yesterday without one tantrum when only recently he couldn't make it through the first hour. This is progress. If the teacher becomes discouraged, remind her of the child's progress, however small it may be.

Also remember to keep parents informed about their child's progress under your behavior management plan. Keeping parents informed usually ensures their continuing support. Of course, in some cases the parents are a major cause of the problem. In these cases a recommendation of family counseling and your offer of assistance may be all that you can do. Remember, too, that in your efforts to help the difficult child you cannot jeopardize the safety and well-being of the other children in the classroom. If the child exhibits extreme behavior, isolation or suspension may be the only options you have.

Do not desert the teacher struggling with a difficult child. There will be days when the pressure and tension becomes too much. Show your support by making frequent visits to the classroom to observe the child. Offer to take the class out to recess periodically or even to teach a lesson while the teacher takes a much deserved breather. Notes of encouragement in the teacher's mailbox or a letter of commendation are always appreciated and needed. In your efforts to help the student, do not neglect the emotional needs of the teacher.

Corporal Punishment

The issue of corporal punishment arouses strong opinions from both educators and the general public. The sides are clearly drawn. There are organizations founded for the single purpose of removing the paddle from the classroom and the principal's office. There are some parents who strongly oppose corporal punishment and others who ask the school to use whatever measures necessary to help them control their children. Educators as well are divided in their opinions. Some would never use it; others maintain that it must remain an option as a disciplinary measure.

One of the strongest statements opposing corporal punishment comes from the Association for Childhood Education International (Cryan 1987): "[T]he barbaric practice of corporal punishment in child care, school and other educative settings must be BANNED." The statement goes on to call for support of "specific alternative disciplinary practices likely to foster self-controlled individuals and a democratic citizenry."

Among the organizations opposing corporal punishment are the National Education Association, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Mental Health Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National PTA. One of the most active organizations opposing corporal punishment is the Committee to End Violence Against the Next Generation. It keeps careful check on the practices of school systems throughout the United States and publishes a newsletter with regular updates of systems swinging over to its philosophy.

As of 1988, 11 states explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in public schools. In addition, many school systems have their own poli-

cies prohibiting corporal punishment. And it is not uncommon for individual principals to prohibit it in their own buildings.

Despite the strong opposition to corporal punishment from many quarters, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Baker* v. *Owen* affirmed a lower court holding that corporal punishment is constitutional if administered with certain procedural protections. And in *Ingraham* v. *Wright*, the Supreme Court ruled in a 5-to-4 decision that corporal punishment does not violate the cruel and unusual punishment clause of the Eighth Amendment or the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Nevetheless, the opposition to corporal punishment continues unabated. Therefore, it behooves every principal to be fully aware of the legal implications of using this form of punishment.

Legal Considerations

Any principal or teacher who chooses to paddle a student assumes some legal risk. First, you must know what policies, if any, your state and district have regarding corporal punishment. Some district policies get very detailed, even to specifying in inches what size the paddle must be. You must adhere strictly to any state or district policies. Second, you must follow procedures as outlined in the *Baker* v. *Owen* decision. These are: 1) the student first must have been warned that the conduct for which he is being disciplined will result in corporal punishment; 2) a second teacher or other school official must be present at the time the punishment is inflicted and must be informed, prior to its infliction and in the student's presence, of the reason for the punishment; and 3) the school official who administered the punishment must provide, on parental request, a written explanation of the reasons for punishment and the name of the second official who was present. Failure to observe these procedures can put you and your school system in legal jeopardy.

There is also the chance that you could be prosecuted for unduly harsh corporal punishment under child abuse or assault and battery statutes. Remember, too, that a parent or citizen at any time may file a complaint with the state department of child welfare claiming that you abused a child while administering corporal punishment. Often the evidence for determining if child abuse occurred is whether welt marks were left on the child. With this kind of complaint, the principal or teacher is treated like any other person being investigated. There is no cloak that protects school employees from investigation or prosecution.

Parental Considerations

It would be most unwise to ignore or to contradict parents' wishes regarding corporal punishment. In schools where corporal punishment is condoned, sometimes a form is sent to parents on which they can indicate if they do not want corporal punishment administered. Most parents seeking this exemption will agree to alternative disciplinary measures by the school or will carry out appropriate measures at home. The authors even have had parents agree to come to the school and handle the corporal punishment themselves. By respecting parents' wishes, you establish one more link with the home, which can go a long way in gaining parents' support and cooperation in matters of discipline.

Some Commonsense Guidelines

If corporal punishment is allowed in your school or system, we suggest the following guidelines:

1. Corporal punishment should be used only for extreme infractions and never for a first offense. In addition, it is always prudent to call the parent before administering corporal punishment.
2. Parents and students should be notified through several channels at the beginning of the school year as to what behaviors or circumstances might result in corporal punishment. The first school newsletter should state the school's policy and typical offenses. PTA meetings, assemblies, classroom meetings, and the school handbook are other forums for communicating the message.
3. The principal should notify parents either in writing or by phone about the use of corporal punishment and the offense that called for it.
4. The principal should maintain complete records of all corporal punishment incidents in the school.
5. There should be a consistent policy as to the number of strikes of the paddle that can be applied to a student.
6. No teacher should be told he or she must use corporal punishment. However, all teachers should receive instruction on the procedures to be followed if it is used, along with alternative disciplinary measures.

It is the authors' position that corporal punishment is a measure of last resort. It should be used only after careful consideration of the individual situation, the student's discipline history, parental support (or lack thereof), and failure of alternative solutions. Corporal punishment is and always will be a severe form of punishment. Any school that relies heavily on its use needs to examine its motives. It is never appropriate to discipline from a position of anger or vengeance. It is only appropriate to discipline from a position of caring for the child's own welfare and of those around him. As a principal, you must know and model the difference.

A Final Word

The ideas presented in these pages may suggest new or different ways of approaching discipline in your current position or in a new assignment. In either case, keep in mind that the task of developing and maintaining an effective discipline program cannot be the responsibility of one person. Only through the collaborative efforts of teachers, students, parents, and the principal can a climate for learning develop that prevents most discipline problems from ever occurring.

Remember, too, the research on effective schools shows that when students are expected to assume responsibility for their own learning, achievement improves and fewer discipline problems occur. In these schools learning is the first priority and achievement is constantly recognized. These schools set high expectations and communicate those expectations to students and their parents.

Although it takes the collaboration of many people to develop effective school discipline, the leadership for the program rests on the shoulders of the principal. Children learn from what they see and hear you do. So, as you help them, remember to model by example what you want them to learn. It could last a lifetime.

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